

# Forever Victims...

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is because once a picture, a film, or any other image of a minor child engaging in a sex act is put into cyber space, it never goes away. Some of today's Y and Z generation of young adults are learning the hard lessons of the Internet's long reach when that stupid college prank or intoxicated rant is uncovered by a potential employer or mate by a simple Google search. But compared to the scars left on these children, their mere embarrassment is folly.

Granted, many of these children come from dire circumstances to begin with, and their parents or guardians are often negligent, if not complicit in the children being exposed to this cruelest element of society. By

the time their images are uploaded they have already been thrice victimized: once by the adults who stole their innocence and allowed them entry into the world of sex and children, again by those who engaged in sex with them on film, and then by those who traffic and trade their images for money or their own narcissistic pleasure.

The ultimate humiliation, however, can come years later when perhaps a twenty something young woman has clawed her way out of the dire circumstances of that miserable childhood. Maybe she worked two jobs and put herself through college. Perhaps she's met someone nice and fallen in love, or is just beginning a family of her own, de-

termined to do better by her own children.

Maybe no one will ever know. Maybe they will never be able to tell that the child's face in the video is actually her grown up. Maybe - but she knows. She always knows. And she lives forever in the fear that someday everybody will find out; and, of course, the face in the picture is hers. Because on the Internet something like this never goes away, she knows that even if it was hard to find that image this morning, by this afternoon somebody in a country half a world away could send it, or trade it, or sell it, and she is victimized all over again.

She always knows - and is forever a victim.

# Protecting Florida's Children



Attorney General  
Bill McCollum

Every chance we get to make Florida a safer place for our children should be pursued vigorously. Last week my office, along with 15 Tampa area agencies, announced the results of a six-week cybercrime operation named "Operation Broken Heart." This joint effort resulted in 45 search warrants executed and 29 arrests made, including the arrest of a sex of-

fender. Several investigations are still pending.

My office, along with the 15 law enforcement agencies involved, worked tirelessly day and night to put predators behind bars. Together, the agencies have developed a strong bond and worked together as a team and will continue to do so, pursuing the mission of protecting children from being exploited. Every chance we get to make Florida a safer place for our children should be pursued vigorously.

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# Maintaining Our Children's Safety with Vigilance and Awareness

\* Tell your children you love them so they will not seek affection or attention elsewhere. Show your children you love them by being positively involved in their lives.

\* Set aside time to talk to your children. Be aware of where your children are and what they are doing. Know your children's social contacts, their age and older. Know who they consider friends. Know what contacts they are making in the community and on the Internet.

\* Know the registered sexual predators and sexual offenders in your neighborhood. Use the information for knowledge about your surroundings and people, not to instill unwarranted fear.

\* Meet your neighbors and introduce them to your children while you are with them. Make it a point to get to know who new neighbors are.

\* Make certain that there are backup people your children can contact if they need assistance and you can't be reached.

\* Teach your children what tricks are used to entice children. Predators and offenders are good at the art of intimidation. They will also attempt to befriend your child and win their confidence. Family members or friends intent on harming your child often do this best.

\* Children should be aware of the dangers of accepting a ride from someone they don't know.

\* Instruct your children what to do if someone trying to abduct them grabs them. Discuss what "abduct" means. Instruct them to yell, scream, kick, scratch, bite, fall to the ground or anything to draw attention from bystanders.

\* Encourage your children to use the buddy system. Teach them to avoid deserted parks, woods, parking lots, al-

leys or even schoolyards late after school.

\* Work out an acceptable route to school and other places they often go. Have them stick with this route. Instruct them to never take shortcuts.

\* Tell your children what to do if you are separated from them while shopping or at a public place.

\* Create opportunities to practice "what if" for a variety of dangerous situations.

\* Monitor your children's computer use. They are still your children even though they may protest.

\* Become familiar with the different communications software used by your child, such as e-mail, instant messaging, phone text messaging and Internet chat rooms, My Space, etc. Have your child demonstrate how they access sites.

\* Tell your children that when on a computer to never give out personal information, never send a photograph or any other item via the Internet without parental permission, never respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable and never agree to get together or meet anyone they meet on-line.

\* Discuss sexual predators and offenders with your children at a level appropriate for their age. Speak openly about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is never discussed.

\* Teach your children that no one has the right to touch them in a way that is painful, uncomfortable, upsetting or confusing to them, not even a friend or a family member.

\* Keep current files on your children, including a recent photo, physical description, extra activities and friends' names, addresses and phone numbers. You will need this information to help locate them should they go missing.

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